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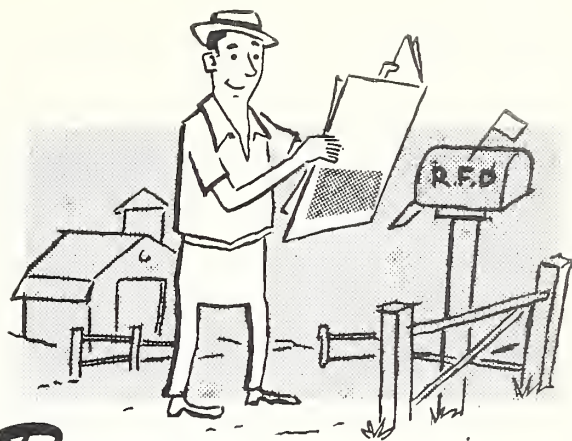


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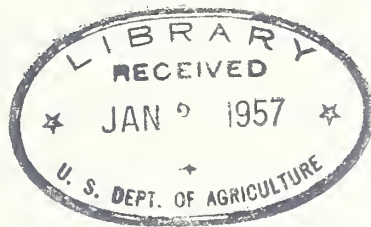
"A free press stands as one of the great interpreters between the government and the people. To allow it to be fettered is to fetter ourselves." - - from a unanimous Supreme Court decision in 1936 striking down a State law limiting free operation of newspapers.



HOW THE USDA SERVES A FREE *Press*

through the work of

Press Service
Office of Information
U. S. Department of Agriculture



The people of the United States are proud of their free press--a newspaper and magazine industry that is privately owned and free from any government control, competition or restraint.

This freedom is written into the U. S. Constitution under its first amendment, which provides that "Congress shall make no law.....abridging the freedom.....of the press."

The U. S. ideal of freedom of the press is based on the people's right to know about anything which is of public concern. The Supreme Court has consistently upheld this principle in a series of notable decisions against any attempt to limit this right.

In dealing with a press which thus rightly considers itself the agency of the people, the Department of Agriculture:

1. Makes information of current interest freely available;
2. Prepares this information in useful forms that will be easy to adapt to newspaper, magazine, and other publication uses; and
3. Accords to writers, editors and others the right to come into the Department during any operating hours to obtain prepared information or to question Department specialists about any current Department business.

More than 12,000 newspapers are published in the United States. Of these, almost 10,000 are published weekly, about 2,000 are published daily. Most of the weeklies are published in small towns or cities and are prepared for a largely rural and suburban readership. Many of the daily papers, though they tend to be published in larger cities, devote special pages or sections to farm news for rural readers.

In addition, about 150 periodicals--weekly and monthly magazines--are published especially for farmers and their families.

Together, these outlets make up what is known as the "farm press."

The Press Service of the Department of Agriculture serves both the farm and daily press by providing, or helping them to find, all available information about the Department's activities and about agriculture in general.

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As the oldest established channel for Department release of current information, the Press Service acts as the central release point for all official announcements of the Department. Though the farm and daily press are among the principal users of these announcements, their use is not restricted to this outlet. Press releases are available to anyone, upon request, and can be adapted for use by any information medium.

On the other hand, neither the farm press, nor any other news outlet outside the government, is obliged to use the information given in prepared Department releases. The information is offered as a service to writers, publishers and broadcasters. Its use depends upon their judgment as to its interest and value to their readers or other audience.

The information contained in a regular Department release is prepared by the information staff of the Department agency reporting some new development or data. The Press Service has the responsibility for: 1) editing these announcements to see that they conform with Department policy, 2) seeing that they are approved by interested Department officials, 3) clearing them with other agencies as needed, and 4) arranging for their reproduction and distribution.

Department releases are distributed as soon as they are available to the national wire services: the Associated Press, the United Press, and International News Service--newsgathering associations whose clients include newspapers and radio stations in every part of the world. Also, between 4 and 5 p.m. of every working day, the day's releases are distributed to more than 150 Washington correspondents for newspapers throughout the country. Desk space and typewriters are provided for any correspondents who wish to come into the Department to work.

Department releases are also distributed by mail through more than 100 selective mailing lists maintained by the Press Service. These lists are made up of names and addresses of people who have requested certain classes of information. For instance, the editor of a dairy industry magazine may request that he be sent only that information which relates to dairy cattle. A mimeographed Daily Summary reducing each of the day's releases to a short summary paragraph is mailed to those who request all types of information.

The Press Service also handles a great many personal visits and telephone calls from writers and others with inquiries about Department programs and activities. Calls for technical or complicated information are referred to specialists in the various 13 agencies of the Department. Press releases are numbered serially and files are maintained so that releases about any subject may be quickly located.

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In addition to its general services to the press, the Press Service--through its own writers--regularly provides certain special services to important classes of writers and publishers. As in the case of regular Department releases, these special services are sent only to those requesting them.

A weekly Farm Paper Letter prepared especially for about 400 farm magazine editors and newspaper farm editors contains several pages of short items about agricultural research, general tips about agricultural developments or events, available new publications, photographs, and reports. Longer reports may be mailed as enclosures with this Letter, and, through personal correspondence, the editor of the Letter supplies other available reports and information upon request. The editor keeps in close touch with this group through their national associations and arranges meetings with Department officials and tours through Department research laboratories for them when they meet in Washington.

Food and Home Notes is a weekly service designed to meet the needs of over 900 women's editors and food editors of newspapers and magazines, and, to a lesser extent, radio and television. Included each week are several short news releases for the family food shopper and homemaker about subjects such as foods plentiful on the markets, nutrition, time-and-labor-saving housework and common household problems such as insect control. Women's editors also receive additional service through special mailing lists, personal correspondence with the editor of the Notes, individual consultation with Department officials, and prearranged tours of Department laboratories.

Several special news releases for the Negro Press are prepared each week for the nearly 200 specialized publications representing the interests of Negro Americans. A general release reporting a more effective ration for hogs developed by USDA scientists, for example, may be followed by a special piece for the Negro press showing how a Negro farmer has tried out the ration and found that it puts weight on his hogs faster and more economically. Other activities and achievements of Negro Americans in the field of agriculture are also reported. Many of these releases are accompanied by pictures taken by the staff writer who prepares them and who also provides special additional services such as gathering information and arranging interviews for writers who wish to prepare their own stories.

The News Service for Weeklies is a special series of releases prepared for weekly newspapers or other local outlets with a rural readership or audience. These releases are sent to extension editors located in each of the State Land-Grant Colleges for release from the State office, or through county agricultural agents, to local news sources. The releases are generally of more lasting interest than regular Department releases and are more directly designed to meet farmers' interests. They may be used as written or may be adapted to meet State or local conditions.

